



Covid-19 Impact Study on UK Musicians' and Music Creators' Livelihoods

This report reveals the impact over the last nine months of Covid-19 on UK musicians and music creators¹ who are at the heart of the UK's £5.8 billion music industry.

[ConnectsMusic](#), a well-established music networking body, reached out to its community of over 5,000 members plus its extended network in a sample survey. The survey sought data on the following aspects of musicians'/music creators' activities:

- Earnings from live performance
- Numbers of performances
- Income from recording session work
- Royalties and composition
- Online performance work and royalties from streaming
- Education work
- Well-being
- Government support

¹ UK Music defines music creators as musicians, composers, songwriters, lyricists, singers, producers and engineers.

THE HEADLINE SURVEY FINDINGS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- **Since the March 2020 lockdown musicians' earnings from live performance have slumped by over 90%**
- **92% of those surveyed have little or no live performances lined up in 2021**
- **83% of the musicians and music creators surveyed reported a significant reduction in earnings from recording**
- **84% of musicians and music creators surveyed have lost teaching work**
- **40% of the musicians and music creators surveyed are considering quitting the music industry**

Whilst the public generally think of musicians in terms of live performance, musicians also earn money from recording, broadcast and publishing royalties, composition and teaching. The [ConnectsMusic](#) survey shows that musicians and music creators have lost significant portions of income from each of these.

The closure of public entertainment facilities has meant that the public has switched to online entertainment instead. The [ConnectsMusic](#) survey shows that there has been an increase in music streaming, but there has not been a corresponding increase in royalty earnings to musicians and music creators (potentially demonstrating a manifestation of the reported issues with the streaming business model).

THE SURVEY'S DETAILED FINDINGS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

Live Performance

92% of musicians surveyed expressed no performance earnings or significantly reduced earnings since 23 March 2020 (lockdown).

Where performances are taking place, almost one third of musicians surveyed said that the fees offered were lower.

92% of those surveyed have few or no live performances lined up in the first half of 2021.

Composing

Nearly half (48%) of music creators surveyed reported a reduction in earnings from composition.

Recording Work

83% of the musicians and music creators surveyed reported a significant reduction in earnings from recording.

Royalties from Streaming

60% of musicians and music creators surveyed reported that their streaming figures had not increased since the March 2020 Lockdown.

Of those musicians and music creators getting royalty income from streaming, only 4% of those surveyed reported an increase in streaming royalties.

88% of surveyed said there had been no increase in income from streaming and 8% said their streaming income had reduced.

Online Performance Work

Just over half the musicians and music creators surveyed (51%) had engaged in some form of live streaming of their work

But only 30% had received any income from online performances.

Education

84% of those musicians and music creators surveyed have lost teaching work

Over half (56%) of those who teach had switched some or all of their teaching to an online practice

27% of musicians and music creators who teach reported a drop in fee rates and teaching income.

Shielding

16% of musicians and music creators surveyed had been shielding and 100% of those shielding had to turn down work because of shielding.

87% of those shielding were prevented from performing live inside venues and 75% from working in recording studios.

94% of those shielding were prevented from returning to in-person teaching.

75% of those shielding were not comfortable explaining their shielding circumstances to promoters, agents, musicians, educators, or people in the industry in general.

Government Support

Two thirds of musicians and music creators surveyed had benefited from some form of Government support. However nearly one third had experienced difficulties in claiming support and 59% were worried about changes to the Government's Self-Employment Income Support Scheme.

67% of musicians and music creators surveyed said they still needed financial support.

Wellbeing

88% of musicians and music creators surveyed said that the last year has been an emotionally difficult time for them.

Only 6% had sought industry support for the challenges they faced. Nearly 80% relied on their own networks for support.

Prospects for the Future

92% of musicians and music creators surveyed had no work lined up for the first half of 2021.

40% of the musicians and music creators surveyed are considering quitting the music industry.

ConnectsMusic analysis of the survey findings:

The Impact of Covid-19 on Musicians' and Music Creators' Lives and Livelihoods

When did you last see a silent film or television programme? When did you last turn on a radio and hear just voices? When you think of the landmark moments in your life or those of your parents or your children, were they silent? Or are there tunes that automatically play through your mind when you remember them? What wedding doesn't feature the newlywed's first dance? Is that a silent shuffle? And can you really celebrate a birthday without singing that evergreen, "Happy Birthday To You"?

Music threads its way through our lives in so many different ways. It provides personal landmarks, the happiest of memories and occasionally the saddest. Music brings communities together; social communities, local communities, communities of interest and the communities that are nations. And a good music soundtrack is the making of a film or TV drama.

These diverse and myriad rivers of sound that permeate our lives and provide landmarks and memories are united by one thing. Ultimately all this music originates from and is made by musicians and music creators. Some of those are performers, highly skilled singers and instrumentalists. Some are gifted composers and arrangers, some are highly creative producers and engineers. Without them our lives would be largely soundless and much the poorer for that.

This survey is principally about professional musicians and music creators. These are people who have innate skill, who've trained to a high degree. As you will see from the data below, two thirds of those responding to our survey are aged over 45 and as such are mature professionals with a lifetime of craft and experience.

Musicians lead unusual and complex lives. They don't necessarily do a 9 to 5 like many people. Music creators can often wear many hats at the same time, encompassing composing, arranging, directing and recording. Covid impacts the full range of professionals - from the people with "portfolio careers" to the international touring artists, most have seen their diaries wiped clean. Many musicians could be found in the recording studio by day playing 'sessions' for jingles, pop hits or film soundtracks, and performing concerts in clubs and concert halls by night. A large number also give tuition, privately or in schools and colleges. As a result their sources of income can be diverse and their earnings and work styles don't always fit neat Government boxes or definitions.

The creativity of this country's musicians and music creators is remarkable and world class. Think of all those UK acts which have performed and made a huge impact all over the world. Composers, songwriters, orchestras, classical soloists, pop and rock acts, dance acts and rappers. For a relatively small Island at the tail-end of Europe the quality of music coming out of the UK over the last 60 or more years is quite astonishing.

UK Music's 2019 'Music By Numbers' report makes the national economic contribution created by our musicians abundantly clear. They are part of a £5.8 billion industry² employing 197,000 people and which has been growing at up to 10% a year. Live music performance alone was worth £1.1 billion in 2018 with recording worth a further £568 million. Music publishing was worth £459 million. Live events attracted 11.2 million music tourists who spent a massive £4.7 billion and supported over 45,000 jobs. In 2019 the export value of the music industry was £2.9 billion.

But for the last year, as our survey shows, this country's immense musical talent has largely been silenced by Covid-19. For a whole year concert halls, arts centres, theatres, recording studios, rehearsal spaces, function and pub rooms have been largely devoid of live music and the human appreciation and applause that goes with that. And many of those talented musicians that fill our evenings with sound have found themselves living on thin air.

Because of the peculiar way freelance music employment works, some of those highly skilled music professionals have slipped through the institutional support nets – over one third of musicians and music creators surveyed were unable to claim any Government support. That 40% of them are now considering leaving the music industry altogether is both shocking and a tragedy.

The role of musicians and music creators goes much wider than just their own creative practice though. Many of these professional music leaders engage with the community; they work in schools, music therapy, lead amateur choirs and orchestras, adjudicate music exams, run University music courses and undertake all manner of music mentoring, education and training work. Lose those musicians and music creators, and that musical input and the quality of our cultural and recreational life suffers hugely.

Our survey findings are largely painted in the colours of hard statistics. But behind those statistics lie personal stories, human worries and huge uncertainties. 88% of the musicians and music creators completing our survey said the last year has been an emotionally difficult time for them.

Nearly one third of the musicians and music creators we surveyed had experienced difficulties in claiming Government support. It is clear from the hard data and the anecdotal evidence we have received that current Government schemes are just not flexible enough to support the very real needs of the creative sector workers including musicians and music creators. That needs addressing.

Productions and tours take time to organise and arrange. Even if UK restrictions on venues and gatherings are lifted in the second half of 2021, experienced music professionals we have talked to believe it will take until 2022 for their employment prospects to pick up.

We are today calling for a Government review into the employment status of self-employed/freelance musicians and music creators to ensure that in circumstances caused by national emergencies in which they are unable to work, including a future pandemic, there are adequate Government support measures to help them through difficult times.

² UK Music. Music By Numbers 2020

As well as the hard data, our survey attracted pages and pages of musicians and music creators comments on how Covid 19 has affected their lives. Here are just a few of their comments and if you want to read more, you'll find them on our website

www.connectsmusic.com

Musicians and Music Creator comments received as part of our survey:

<p><i>I am a gigging musician who teaches. Like many I had more PAYE work then 50% so failed to qualify for any government money. Gigging is about 40% to 45% of my income so I've taken substantial hit on that. I've literally had one gig since March when normally I would be doing one or two a week .</i></p>
<p><i>I've lost my job, I have a mortgage, I haven't been able to claim a single grant or benefit. I now work in a factory. I was on a roster of teacher/performers for a day of online masterclasses last weekend. The company I was amongst was as high as it gets, I could hardly play. My hands are numb from manual labour.</i></p>
<p><i>I had to take up an office job in July as I couldn't see much chance of being able to make a living from music...I feel very fortunate that I found a job at all but it's hard to imagine not feeling difficult about it. I've worked in music full time for the past 13 years, both as a performer and an educator (I even have a PhD in the subject) and somehow it all feels irrelevant now...</i></p>
<p><i>Those musicians who earn more than 50% of their income from PAYE teaching sources should get SEISS (or equivalent) on the remaining self-employed portion. Many have fallen through this particular net.</i></p>
<p><i>Literally how have so many people slipped through the net for any financial support. My savings are depleting significantly and the thought of being almost destitute before I can get any help from anyone keeps me up most nights.. If there could be a basic liveable income for those in industries currently not open due to the lockdown and current restrictions, that would bring some relief to many.</i></p>
<p><i>I feel that perhaps one good thing that could come from this pandemic is if we can make streaming fair. Fair to songwriters. Fair to musicians. Fair to producers. I'd prefer to go back to physical or downloads and let 40% be piracy than 100% be effectively streamed for free 'legally'. The value of music has been driven down, in perception, when actually it is higher than ever before.</i></p>
<p><i>I've been lucky to tour with people from the top bands in history. It's shocking to see how much they earned compared to what musicians are expected to live on now.... when really revenue options are higher and better than ever. And yet a sync for a song on Love Island I wrote and produced netted me almost nothing. Like.... less than 1/4 of a beer.</i></p>
<p><i>Major labels & streaming sites have boasted record profits while the average musicians can't make the living wage and are often overlooked for being signed. More has to be done to bring value back to recordings and genuine art.</i></p>
<p><i>I didn't qualify for SEISS because my 2018-2019 tax return included more than 50% employed income, even though I currently don't have any employed income. I don't know why it couldn't have just been calculated on the self-employed income I had all along.</i></p>
<p><i>It seems unjust that those who have recently changed employment have not been eligible for furlough or any other form of financial support. In times of crisis there should be some form of universal basic income to ensure that nobody loses their home or their life.</i></p>
<p><i>I have to run the risk of putting myself in 'vulnerable' situations if there is an option to work. Obviously I would rather not put myself in harm's way but it feels like I have to if there is a chance of work as any form of income is so precious at the moment.</i></p>
<p><i>Many colleagues have had zero financial support because of arbitrary income limits that apply to the self-employed, but these limits don't apply to the furlough scheme.</i></p>

Whilst I'm dearly grateful that I was in the limited group of people able to claim SEISS, I found its inconsistent delivery incredibly stressful. We initially received support in arrears (for 3 months), but those timelines have been gradually stretched, to being received with 4-5 month gaps, but the amount not pro-rata to balance with this. It's also unclear if it's swapped from being in arrears to now seeming in advance, there's a huge gap in timeline and info... This has hugely contributed to the immense financial and emotional stress over this heartbreaking year.

They should apply the same support criteria to employed and self employed people. The £50,000 cut off for self employed people was arbitrary and totally unfair.

Really worried about friends who have not qualified for financial support because of PAYE & self employment split, or because they have been set up as a limited company or newly self employed.. I am getting worried. I am 59 with some health difficulties and can't see much prospects of getting other work.

Especially in times like these, I feel it is important for us to look after our mental-health and our general well-being. A continued emphasis on the range of mental-health support schemes and networks available to people working in the arts would be really invaluable as this is an industry which has been significantly affected due to the pandemic.

Just remember how music is core throughout every day of our lives (streams, radio, TV, films, games, celebrations). The next time you hear a favourite song, and maybe hum along, it took a composer to write it, and a musician to record it and to perform it.

About This Survey

[ConnectsMusic](#) has a combined online membership of over 5000 people. We contacted our members and wider networks, with over 300 musicians and music creators filling in our survey.

We dearly thank every one of our respondents for taking the time to share their personal experiences with us in these difficult times.

About ConnectsMusic

[ConnectsMusic](#) is an online community of over 5,000 members where artists share work and ideas. It's a free, digital-focussed platform and directory for connection and collaboration in the world of music. Made up of artists, venues, organisations, we're incredibly proud to be joined by a multitude of like-minded people. We support, show and share the talent that is out there, especially in this current time when our music world is being so greatly affected – community has never been more important to us all.

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